

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

Easter changes everything, redefines everything, determines everything.

And it all started on a Sunday long ago.

Today's reading begins:

*“Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early,
while it was still dark,
and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.”* (Jn 20:1)

The first day is Sunday—

the beginning of creation,
when Light was first made.

And not the light of the Sun, which rules the day;
or the moon and stars, that rule the night—
those all came on Day 4.

And It wasn't the light of florescent light bulbs, or flash-lights, or iPad screens.

The first born of all creation is an incomprehensible light—
whose source is only in God's Word.

“And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.

And God saw that the light was good.

And God separated the light from the darkness.

God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night.

And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Gen 1:3-5)

St. John makes a point to tell us that Mary Magdalene got there early

“while it was still dark” (Jn 20:1)—

so that when the true Light shines, all darkness would be scattered!

Now, Mary Magadalene is a lot like us.

She stood by the cross just a few days ago,

watching the blood drip,

and His muscles twitch as He was fastened to the cross.

She was there when the soldier pierced His side and saw the blood and water flow out.

But here she is at the tomb.

The stone's rolled away, the body's gone, and she's terrified—

Peter and John don't know what to make of it;

everyone goes home.

Everyone, that is, except Mary.

“But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb” (Jn 20:11).

And how could she not?

Wasn't it bad enough what they did?

Wasn't the mocking enough?

Now they steal His body, torturing Him even while dead?

Why? What evil has He done?

St. John continues,

“And as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb.

*And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain,
one at the head and one at the feet.*

They said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’

*She said to them, ‘They have taken away my Lord,
and I do not know where they have laid Him.’” (20:11b-13)*

Mary doesn't know about Easter.

She thinks the suffering is still going on,
that her Lord is still being humiliated,
still being mocked.

She has no joy, no light, no hope.

Without Easter, there's only sadness, weeping, and bitter anger.

Apart from the risen Christ, there's nothing:
no hope, no faith, no love.

Without Easter, the dead are found in their tombs, or worse yet—
brought out for mocking and ridicule.

Without Easter there's no joy or peace—
only darkness and unrest.

And not just for Jesus, but for you!

Apart from Easter we're left with tears in our eyes and darkness in our hearts,
and no one to wipe the tears away or scatter the darkness of our hearts.

But Easter changes everything.

Darkness is overcome with light.

Wrath with peace.

Fear with hope.

Sadness with joy.

Hatred with love.

Sin with righteousness.

And death with life.

Easter changes everything, redefines everything, determines everything.

But, why doesn't it always seem that way?
 Why do our loved ones still die?
 Why do we keep on sinning?
 Why are we still afraid of our future and tormented by our past?
 Why are we still angry and confused and broken?
 Where is our joy?

It's because we, like Mary, are looking for the right thing in all the wrong places.

We try to have Jesus apart from His Word.
 We come up with an idea of what Jesus should be like.
 And we refuse to hear from His own Word who He is and what He's all about.

*"She did not know that it was Jesus. And Jesus said to her,
 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?'"* (20:14-15)

We look for the answers to life in our work or our play.
 We look for satisfaction and praise in the things we've done;
 or in things that will never satisfy us at all.
 We look for fulfillment and joy in our feelings,
 and sometimes in our relationships.
 We look for an answer to our problems by what we set our minds to,
 or in something that will take our minds away.

Repent.
 He is not there! He has risen!

Our Lord Jesus is where He has promised to be all along:
 wherever His Word is going on—
 both in the preaching of the Gospel
 and in the eating and drinking of the Sacrament.

That's where He is!
 And that's where you should be too—
 not just today,
 not just once or twice a year,
 not when it's convenient, or easy, or when you feel behind in your giving.

You should be where Christ is, because there you'll find your answers.
 There, in His Word, you'll find every promise, every joy, every fulfillment.

It's Christ who said,
 *"I am the resurrection and the life.
 Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,
 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."* (Jn 11:25)

Whoever clings to His Word, clings to Him.
 Though he was crucified and died, yet He lives!
 Though darkness fills your heart, He is here to scatter the darkness and fill you with light!

Easter changes everything, defines everything, determines everything.

Heaven and earth are reconciled.
 God is at peace with mankind.
 He has no more wrath, no more anger, no bitterness—
 it's all gone and spent on the Son;
 so there's none left for you.

The light that once scattered the darkness has now scattered it once and for all.
 This Light, this Christ has conquered death,
 emptied the tomb,
 made His bed,
 and calls us each by name.

“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’” (Jn 20:16)

And she got it!
 She knew His voice.

And so do we.
 He's called us each by name.
 First through the font,
 but then on the last day, just like Lazarus,
 He'll call our name and we'll come hobbling out of the grave.

What goes for Christ goes for you!
 Your Redeemer lives!
 And you live!
 Christ is raised from the dead.
 Death is defeated,
 and your sin is no more.

And here the Risen Christ comes to us again today.

He comes with His word of sins forgiven.
 He comes with His promise of life everlasting.
 He comes with bread with wine with water with word.
 He comes to you.
 Every Lord's Day.
 Every Sunday.
 Easter changes everything—even you!

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